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ABSTRACT

Arguing that educational disadvantage, underachievement, and dropping out are problems that originate with schools as well as students, this document describes the Work and Learning Center in Madison, Wisconsin, that was designed to meet the needs of high school dropouts. The first section gives disadvantaged students' perspectives on the school social environment, the high school curriculum, high school completion, and work. Included are brief descriptions of relevant research findings that contribute to a theoretical framework that can guide educational planning in this area. The second section describes the Madison Work and Learning Center (WLC), begun in 1977 for severely disadvantaged students and dropouts. The section contains information on the social environment of the WLC, the WLC's graduation requirements, and community-based vocational education in the WLC's curriculum. The third section discusses barriers to effective educational planning for dropouts and potential dropouts, including a fragmented approach to school reform, the existing social dynamics of high schools, centralized curriculum planning and standards, and prerequisite courses for community-based training. A summary lists four common characteristics of successful programs such as the WLC: small (60-100) number of students; teachers' belief that they can be creative and inventive in responding to students' needs; teachers' sense of program "ownership"; and a cross-disciplinary team of teachers that fosters collegial relationships. The summary also encourages readers to imagine large high schools developing schools-within-schools that have these identified characteristics and attracting students from among those who would otherwise drop out. Five references are included. (CML)

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CONSIDERATIONS IN THE DESIGN OF THE WORK AND LEARNING CENTER

Schools working with disadvantaged youth have a major role to play in the economic future of the nation. School success with disadvantaged students is vitally important because failure leads to an immense cost in lost productivity and taxes and to costs associated with welfare and incarceration. Too often, however, school responses to these problems are misdirected.

Typically, educational planners have assumed that educational disadvantage, underachievement, and dropping out are problems that originate solely within the individual student. Until recently the literature on high school dropouts was dominated by litanies of personal characteristics (i.e., large family, single-parent home, low income, minority group status, problems with authority) associated with leaving school before graduation. These litanies, in effect, blamed the victims. Seldom did one find mention of an association between educational practices and dropout rates. Therefore, schools by omission were portrayed as innocent bystanders within a growing national problem. When schools did attempt to intervene, the presumption of school innocence that was implied in the research on dropouts often determined the nature of interventions. Treating the problem as residing solely with individual students, schools attempted to encourage potential dropouts to adjust to existing educational practices by utilizing nonteaching human service professionals. Counselors and social workers were mandated to help change disadvantaged students' attitudes toward school, but they generally lacked the power or authority to change school as an

institution. Many educators still hold disadvantaged students unilaterally responsible for lack of school success.

This posture is, I believe, self-serving and no longer affordable. Rather, we have reached a point where a fundamentally new perspective on educating the disadvantaged student is necessary. That perspective must accept as givens that (1) an increasing number of the nation's youth will not respond well to prevailing educational practices; (2) nonteaching human service professionals' success in achieving student adjustment will remain limited; (3) the problems are interactive in nature, with both students and schools bearing responsibility for lack of success; (4) educators have much control over school environments and little control over home and community; and (5) consequently, schools will have to change fundamentally in order to better serve disadvantaged youth. Because the changes that are necessary cannot be effectively accomplished through a piecemeal and fragmented approach to school reform, vocational education's future is inseparably linked to other needed changes.

In the sections that follow, I pursue this premise through a discussion of disadvantaged students' perspectives toward school and work, as well as the theoretical orientations that explain these perspectives and have prescriptive value for educational planning, a description of school program strategies, and a discussion of barriers to effective programming.

Disadvantaged Students' Perspectives Toward School and Work

This section portrays the interrelated perspectives disadvantaged students have toward the social environment of the school, high school completion, curriculum, and work.

Perspectives on the School Social Environment

The social environment of the high school is highly complex. Within this environment several variables emerge as having major influence on the disadvantaged student's perspective toward school. First, and probably foremost, high school students create and maintain a hierarchy of social groups and social statuses. These statuses confer student roles and are therefore crucial in determining the individual student's participation in the life of the school. Educationally disadvantaged students typically perceive that they have a low status within the social hierarchy. They report that higher status students band together within and outside of classes, ignoring and therefore excluding others from participation in desirable social and school roles.

Teachers are often perceived as consciously or unconsciously supporting higher status social groups at the expense of others. Disadvantaged students are very sensitive to the impact that educator practices have on their status. They use a variety of contextual clues to determine if educators like, accept, and care for them. The educator's tone of voice and body language are quickly assessed. Overhearing negative talk about a member of his social group, a disadvantaged student will assume that those speaking have unfairly stereotyped the entire group. And, when a teacher directs lessons to the educationally advantaged students (an understandable practice when they are more responsive), the disadvantaged student perceives unfairness and discrimination.

The problem, of course, does not reside entirely with educators. Rather, it is an example of the dynamism and interaction of the school-student relationship. Disadvantaged students, in their attitudes and

behaviors, often test adults, purposefully teasing out the responses that they later criticize. The effective response must demonstrate enough caring and respect to overcome any appearance of unfairness. At the same time, the response must be tough enough to establish limits on dysfunctional behavior.

Separation by status also exists outside the classroom--in the school's corridors and other gathering places. Geographic territories are created in and around the school. It is school achievers who inhabit special interest areas such as the weight room, music room, and the high status corner of the cafeteria. Disadvantaged students often find a territory out of the building or even off school grounds.

Related to this, disadvantaged students perceive that high schools are too large and impersonal. These students generally were more successful in an elementary school setting, where 25 students were together all day with one primary adult. High school class scheduling, on the other hand, atomizes the student body, and selected groups are then established for intense and sustained activities such as athletics and the biology honor society. If classes are a student's only source of school involvement, contact with any one teacher is slight and typically superficial. Students who do not fit into any of the selective outside-of-class activities have reason to feel that the high school is impersonal.

The result of these institutional characteristics is that students in the lower reaches of the social hierarchy feel that they "don't belong" and that their school opportunities are limited. Perceiving themselves as disenfranchised from important school roles, disadvantaged students typically create a separate subculture that develops alternative activities. These activities are often contrary to school achievement.

Perspectives on High School Completion and Curriculum

A prevailing view held by many educators is that educational disadvantagement originates with and is caused by families that do not value education. Along the four-year journey through high school, many disadvantaged students give the appearance of not valuing high school completion. There is a face-saving quality about rejecting something that is seen as not attainable, and this relates to an important student perspective toward high school completion. Disadvantaged students intuitively calculate the probability of their timely graduation. Recognizing the odds, they drop out of school when the possibility of graduation, before becoming embarrassingly old for high school, becomes too remote.

In fact, one could argue that disadvantaged students place too great a value on graduation per se; as a result, they are frequently unwilling to engage in occupational or life skills training that is not part of a diploma package. The intensity of society's current emphasis on the value of a diploma and postsecondary training causes students to discount the value that can be gained from separate academic and occupational skill training experiences, leading them to take a diploma-or-nothing attitude toward education. For some, this may be a constructive pressure that encourages greater achievement. For others, however, the emphasis on a diploma backfires because students drop out when they perceive that achieving a diploma becomes unlikely, uncompromisingly foregoing education and training experiences through which they could have developed additional skills.

Related to the disadvantaged students' diploma-or-nothing perspective toward school, much of the high school curriculum is perceived to be

impractical and abstract. As such, courses are often viewed not as learning opportunities but rather as hurdles to be overcome. Consequently, attempting to bluff one's way through school by pretending to know the material is a common practice.

A preconceived and inflexible choice of curriculum or a predetermined requirement that teachers cover a given amount of material can result in inappropriate course requirements. By attempting to bluff their way through the course, however, disadvantaged students at least temporarily mask their learning problems. As soon as it becomes clear that students did not really learn the required material, it is usually time to introduce the next, more complex chapter.

Perspectives Toward Work

It is typical of American adolescents to be at least somewhat confused about their futures as workers and to desire to keep open as many options as possible. In most respects disadvantaged students are no exception, but due to their lack of school success, they present educators with a number of special challenges.

Teachers and counselors often observe that disadvantaged students have approximately the same aspirations as their more advantaged classmates. Though disadvantaged, they too state that they want to be doctors, lawyers, and computer experts. The advantaged and disadvantaged groups' choices both tend to fall into a small range of conspicuous and high status occupations. At some point, however, similarities in aspirations between the advantaged and disadvantaged are thought by many to become problematic, because for the disadvantaged such choices are often considered unrealistic.

Incidents of unrealistic self-assessment about future work are often explainable. First, contrary to the view that disadvantaged families do not value education, parents often encourage their educationally disadvantaged children not to settle for a "second rate" education or occupation. This perspective seems to be influenced by current criticisms of tracking and vocational education and by studies indicating the relative advantages of a four-year college education. The position taken by parents (and other advocates for disadvantaged students) can be surprisingly uncompromising and is a somewhat more extreme version of students' "diploma-or-nothing" position.

Second, disadvantaged students, I believe, are often quite sincere about their high aspirations. They may actually know very little about the requirements of the job under consideration and may know even less about the entrance and skill requirements for college. The more advantaged students gain much of this kind of information through developmentally important life experiences outside of school, experiences that are unavailable to many disadvantaged youth.

Another notable variation on the theme of not accepting a second-rate education or occupation occurs when teachers in cooperative education programs attempt to help disadvantaged youth find an employment training site. Some disadvantaged students who appear to most need a job will resist the typical student job in an effort to "hold out" for a higher status position. This characteristic is understandable in the context of the previous discussion: If there is a realistic and lingering fear on the part of the disadvantaged student, the lower level work may become a permanent fate.

Theories That Explain the Disadvantaged Students' Perspectives

In our attempt to assist disadvantaged students, we have found it helpful to use several related theoretical orientations to guide educational planning. The core of the problem, we believe, is that severely disadvantaged students experience alienation from school and often from society. The most helpful orientations in terms of educational planning should not only explain the student's alienation but should also provide prescriptive guidance in terms of creating innovations in school programs.

In a major work on juvenile delinquency, Hirschi (1969) found that delinquents were not as psychologically or socially bonded as were law-abiding youth. This meant that they lacked involvement, association, commitment, and belief relative to conventional norms and institutions. These deficits also describe the dropout's relationship to school.

Elliott and Voss (1975) contributed another dimension to the study of the phenomenon of social bonding by analyzing its opposite, the roots of school and social alienation. Following Cloward and Ohlin (1960), the researchers portrayed alienation in terms of a disjuncture between a youth's aspirations and perceived opportunities within conventional routes to success. Schools, perhaps inadvertently, contributed to lack of opportunity for disadvantaged students by providing narrowly defined alternatives that incorporated a middle-class bias. School appealed most to students willing to engage in cerebral activities, which were considered by disadvantaged students to be too passive, abstract, and irrelevant to their present or future lives. In addition, school was seen as a highly competitive environment that excluded many disadvantaged students from developmentally important opportunities.

In addition, Coleman (1974) saw developmental possibilities in youth's involvement in the community outside the school and proposed that schools should place students in positions of responsibility affecting others. Based on that view, we determined that schools should overtly promote social bonding by strategically creating new student roles that would appeal to disadvantaged youth, that would engage them in school and in the conventional culture outside of school, that would involve them with adults other than teachers, and that were developmentally important.

With these criteria in mind, a program was begun 12 years ago for severely disadvantaged students and dropouts. That program, the Madison Work and Learning Center, is the subject of the following section.

The Work and Learning Center

The Work and Learning Center (WLC) was especially designed for Madison's dropouts, those who have been the least responsible about their schoolwork. Paradoxically, the uniqueness and strengths of the program are found in the demands that the school makes of students in terms of involvement in community and work roles requiring much responsibility.

The WLC is small in size, serving 60 disadvantaged students ages 16 to 20 in four rooms of a former elementary school. The school staff consists of three full-time teachers and a university practice teacher. The students are separated into four class levels depending on the number of semesters each group has been in the program. The program's four-semester curricular sequence includes both academics and employment training, involving all students in half-days of classroom work and half-days in community-based internships or jobs. As each group moves through the curricular sequence, students engage in new tasks that are staged to be increasingly complex.

During their two years in the program, students must therefore demonstrate an increasing level of commitment to school and work through successful accomplishment within the program's education and work framework.

The Social Environment of the WLC

The student population at the WLC is homogeneous in one important respect: Before entering the program, each student experienced at least two years of failure in the city's large high schools. Two-thirds of these youths had dropped out and the remaining students, in almost all cases, had stopped attending regularly. Beyond these factors, however, the homogeneity of the student population diminishes. Some students are unskilled, while others are gifted and talented. The program attracts the economically poor as well as the middle class and, reflecting the makeup of the community, has been predominantly white but enrolling growing numbers of black and Hispanic students.

In an effort to prevent the development of a student social hierarchy, classes are limited to 15 students, the smaller enrollment tending to help prevent the formation of subgroups within the class. Because they are together for a two-year school experience, the dynamics within each group of students approximate those of a family. These characteristics represent a critical departure from the manner in which almost all American high schools are organized.

In keeping with the theme of the school class as a family, the program's teachers constantly demonstrate concern for students as whole people through a mixture of overt caring and very high expectations. With attendance requirements so stringent that students are in school more than 90 percent of the time, with a curriculum that is flexibly individualized

for the diversity of student skill levels, and with each student required to do all of his or her assigned work, important distinctions that elsewhere separate successful from unsuccessful students are minimized.

Though strict in its expectation that students act as "responsible adults," the WLC provides a comfortable environment. Students often choose to remain at school when not in classes, making their lunches in the lounge and then lingering to talk to the program staff. The tacit agreement that governs even informal teacher-student discussions is that teachers will respect the confidentiality of almost all information (information about life-threatening situations or abuse are two exceptions about which students are well aware) but will privately respond to student disclosures by insisting that students work toward resolution of problems. While casual, comfortable, and egalitarian, the social environment of the WLC is clearly not superficial or permissive.

WLC Graduation Requirements

Consistent with the position that students attend school to receive a diploma, the WLC provides disadvantaged students a unique opportunity. After two successful years of intense study and work, participants receive a diploma from their original high school. During the two years, the program calls on students to demonstrate academic and employment competencies that serve as the criteria, in lieu of credits, for graduation. Approximately half of the students who enroll in the WLC do not muster the commitment and discipline necessary to remain. Students leaving the program generally work toward a GED or obtain an entry-level job. As students choose to leave, or are asked to leave, their places in the program are taken by other students from the program's waiting list.

The use of competency and performance criteria, in lieu of credit for graduation, is a controversial facet of the program. The reasons used to justify this policy are (1) society and the individual dropouts are both better served if these youth are attracted back to school; (2) the diploma within two years is the incentive needed if these students are to re-enroll; (3) through the academic requirements of the WLC, participants demonstrate academic skills at least equivalent to lower ranking graduates from any large high school class; and (4) the community-based training requirements of the WLC represent important employment-related criteria that exceed typical requirements for graduation.

Community-Based Vocational Education in the WLC Curriculum

From its inception, the WLC has provided disadvantaged students with a unique range of positive roles and developmentally important opportunities. Each semester's academic curriculum involves basic skills: reading, writing, and mathematics. Beyond the basics, each of the four semesters also develops a central theme: (1) human interaction; (2) economic survivor skills; (3) law, government, and labor issues; and (4) personal choice and identity. The curricular themes are sequenced to move students from egocentric to more sociocentric thinking. The community-based training corresponds to each semester's theme and requires increasingly complex involvement in adult social and work roles.

During the first semester, related to the theme of human interaction, students work a minimum of 15 hours a week in day care centers or in early primary classes in elementary schools. There are a number of reasons for requiring this work: The cooperating teachers at each site are trained in a human service occupation and work effectively with the still-undisciplined

disadvantaged volunteers; the environment is nonthreatening; WLC students can be placed immediately in positions of responsibility affecting the small children; relative to the children, the WLC students are adults and act accordingly; and the children adore the WLC students, providing a boost to the older students' low sense of worth.

While few of the WLC students will develop childworker careers, these sites provide other valuable lessons, such as interviewing for a position, dressing and acting appropriately, and being on time. In addition, many of the WLC students were almost totally isolated from adults through immersion in their own contrived youth culture, so the adult contacts provide an important new link to the conventional culture. Finally, the training serves as a laboratory experience for learning human interaction skills (such as child development and effective parenting) taught in the academic curriculum.

During the second semester, WLC students rehabilitate old houses. The project is supervised by an adult carpenter--with students doing all of the required work except plumbing, and electrical and furnace work, which must be completed by licensed contractors. The project provides opportunity for students to get firsthand experience in many occupations ranging from landscaping to drywall finishing. More important, however, the work is not only physically hard but also challenges the students' thinking and planning skills. Most tasks require a high level of cooperation among the students, a quality much sought by employers. Finally, the house becomes an attractive, salable, and livable product--a lasting and tangible monument to the students' hard work, budding skill, and commitment.

Based on these somewhat sheltered experiences during the first year of the program, third and fourth semester students are ready to work in real jobs in the private, or occasionally the public, sector. Toward the end of their second semester, the students complete a self-assessment curriculum that helps them tentatively identify jobs of interest. Third semester requires that each student complete two nine-week internships in selected jobs.

The internship requires that students work for 15 hours a week, not just to observe but to assume responsible and productive work roles. The students are supervised by a representative of the business community and also by their WLC teacher through periodic visits. As this experience progresses, the most important component of an ongoing assessment of student interest and abilities takes place. In school, students are required to write about and discuss their training experiences. The on-site supervisor and the teacher complete evaluations of performance, and they discuss their impressions with the student. Through this combination of firsthand job experience, reflection, and feedback from observers, students are positioned to choose an occupation in which to receive training during the final semester of the program.

Fourth semester training is a more intensive version of the third semester internships. A training agreement and timeline are established, detailing progressively complex tasks and expectations for students. This agreement is as much for employers as it is for students because it calls on employers to periodically promote deserving students into new and more complex learning experiences.

During this semester some students opt for nonpaying jobs. There is often an important advantage for students willing to accept a nonpaid placement: The jobs for which they volunteer are in higher level occupations that have more competitive hiring procedures. Students "get a foot in the door" through willingness to work solely for the experience and the recommendation. Often, the student who shows such initiative is soon put on the payroll in a position that would otherwise have gone to someone with more training or experience.

There is one other variation on training that is important for the more intellectually interested and talented. During their fourth semester, students interested in careers that require college-level skills may begin work at the local community college. The WLC staff helps these students through the enrollment process and allows them to fulfill the program's work requirement with the college courses. One recent example illustrates the use of this strategy. Martha, a gifted student, had been a school failure during the two years that she was a victim of abuse. Convinced that she wanted to be a psychologist or social worker, Martha began her college work prior to high school graduation, attending the WLC in the morning and taking afternoon classes at the community college. The help and encouragement of the WLC staff contributed to her success, and upon graduation she became a full-time college student.

In another example, both formal interest inventories and vocational counseling led Belinda to believe that she would be interested in a career in data entry. During her third semester in the program, Belinda completed an internship in data entry, only to discover that she could not tolerate the work. "I'm a people person," she concluded. "[D]ata entry was not at

all for me." Comparing that experience to the semester as a childcare worker, Belinda determined that her interests and skills were in working with children.

Anthony returned to school at the WLC at the age of 19 after receiving drug treatment and having twice dropped out of school. During his third semester in the program, he worked for a chainstore specializing in shoes. He immediately developed a strong relationship with the store manager, who enrolled him in the corporation's management training program. By the time of his graduation, Anthony was an assistant manager and could foresee the day when he would have his own store.

John knew before entering the WLC that he wanted to be a diesel mechanic. He also knew, however, that in spite of his interests and skills he probably would never become a mechanic without graduating, so he reentered school at the WLC. During his third semester in the program, John worked without pay at a large truck service center. The mechanic with whom he worked became a mentor who was willing to involve John in increasingly complex tasks. John chose to remain at the service center for fourth semester; at that point, his supervisor and mentor convinced the management to put him on the payroll. By graduation John's pay had risen to $2.00 an hour above minimum wage, and the firm had agreed to sponsor him for an intense, six-week manufacturer's training school. In the fall he returned to the firm as an apprentice mechanic.

These positive outcomes of schooling were accomplished by a small program costing approximately $2,800 per pupil annually. The program staff have developed special interests and skills in teaching disadvantaged

students, maintaining a productive school social environment, and utilizing community resources to provide a unique vocational training sequence.

Barriers to Effective Planning

A number of implications follow from these perspectives and the description of a promising program. These are discussed below through identification of barriers to effective programming.

A Fragmented Approach to School Reform

The disadvantaged student's successful engagement in vocational education is inextricably tied to academic course requirements, the student's degree of success in other classes, and the probability of receiving a diploma. As academic requirements for graduation are increased, students have fewer opportunities to take vocational electives. A more subtle impact occurs if academic requirements become bottlenecks on the way to graduation. For example, the student who for the second time is failing a biology course that is required for graduation is at very high risk of dropping out, regardless of the degree of success in vocational classes.

Both the stringency of the academic requirements and the student's degree of success in meeting those requirements have an impact on a school's potential to provide vocational education to disadvantaged students. This suggests that it is futile to consider changes in vocational education apart from a more general reform of the high school.

The Existing Social Dynamics of High Schools

The social dynamics of the large high school setting work against the success of disadvantaged students in several ways. First, the size of America's urban high schools contributes to students differentiating themselves into a hierarchy of groups, with disadvantaged students being at

or close to the bottom. Second, students compete for a small number of positive school roles that can be viewed as being developmentally important in enhancing their status. Disadvantaged students often lose out in this competitive environment to those who already have a home and community advantage and who, through success at school, double or triple that advantage. Rather than serving as the great equalizer, the American high school tends to reproduce the status quo by rewarding students who arrived at school with middle-class characteristics and discouraging those who did not.

Third, in the large high school professional norms often allow teachers to fail a large percentage of their students, justifying the failure rate as an attempt to maintain high expectations and standards. In addition, the large high school's continued existence does not depend on the disadvantaged students' rate of success. Instead, if disadvantaged students drop out, the class is then smaller, more homogeneous, and therefore less difficult to teach. The accumulated consequences for the dropouts and society in lost productivity and taxes, however, are staggering.

Centralized Curriculum Planning and Standards

There are appealing reasons for centralizing the development of curriculum and the implementation of standards. Some teachers are not effective in their planning and are not good judges of the standards that should be used to determine student grades. Without direction, they will fail a large number of students.

On the other hand, a centrally planned curriculum is invariably inappropriate for some groups of students and eliminates the opportunity for teachers to be professionally creative and inventive. Gone also is a degree

of professional responsibility important in developing ownership and accountability for the outcomes of education.

I have at this point argued, first, that teacher autonomy to define coursework and set standards can result in a high rate of failure among disadvantaged students and, second, that a lack of autonomy can have the same result. The problem in the first instance is that teachers are not accountable, and in the second instance, the teachers are accountable only to the district central office plan rather than to students and their parents.

I would argue, and I believe that disadvantaged students would agree, that teachers should have professional autonomy to choose and develop curriculum, but the autonomy should be tempered with help for teachers who are not good at planning and with attention to the need to strike a balance between district articulation of expectations and the reality that some students will not have progressed at the planned rate.

Disadvantaged students need a curriculum and grading standards that provide challenge but also ample opportunity for success. Curriculum and standards that are pegged too high lead to student discouragement and then dropping out, outcomes that the nation can no longer afford.

Prerequisite Courses as Barriers to Community-Based Learning

Most high school vocational programs require students to complete a year or two of classroom training before being placed at a community-based training site. Many or perhaps most disadvantaged students do not complete the prerequisite courses and therefore never have an opportunity for community-based learning.

In contrast, in the WLC and in other successful programs for disadvantaged students, community-based experience (experiential education) is not the culmination of training but is an integral part of the entire training process.

There are a number of plausible explanations for the success of experiential education: It is a mechanism for broadening the available curriculum; it provides opportunity for students to learn by doing; it positions students to develop meaningful relationships to persons older and younger than they are; it places students in positions of responsibility; and it provides opportunity to try various jobs prior to, rather than after, investment in training.

Related to these explanations, experiential education is an engaging mode of instruction for students previously disengaged, and it fosters responsible involvement among previously irresponsible youth.

Summary

Given the magnitude and the interlocking nature of the school problems facing disadvantaged students, I am pessimistic about the chances of adapting large-scale high school programs to meet their needs and the nation's need for an educated work force. Rather, a more thorough reorganization of the high school may be required if we are to better serve disadvantaged students. The Work and Learning Center and similar successful programs can provide some direction to such a reorganization. These successful programs appear to have some common characteristics (Wehlage, Stone, & Lesko, 1981): (1) the unit of instruction is often small (between 60 and 100 students); (2) the programs' teachers perceive that they have professional autonomy to be creative and inventive in responding to student

needs; (3) the teachers also perceive a strong sense of program ownership and accountability for the success of program participants; and (4) the across-discipline team of teachers develops a collegial perspective toward education, sharing ideas and mutually supporting one another.

One can imagine the nation's large high schools developing schools-within-schools, with each of the smaller units of instruction approaching these identified characteristics. Some of these small schools would develop a vocational theme such as health occupations or sales and marketing, closely relating academics to applied learning. And some of the small units would provide the quality of support and opportunities for career exploration that are found at the Work and Learning Center. If such programs could be developed to attract students from among those who now drop out, existing school programs would not be compromised, and society as a whole--and particularly the most disadvantaged students--would be well served.

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